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AUTHOR Stano, Michael
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ABSTRACT

Intended for use by managers, consultants, and teachers of courses in organization behavior, organizational communication, and interviewing, this literature review brings together a great deal of what has been written concerning appraisal interviews. Based on the review, the paper offers 13 guidelines for preparing and conducting appraisal interviews, including (1) plan, schedule, and choose the right setting for the interview; (2) concentrate on results rather than personality; (3) account for variables outside the employee's control; (4) discuss the employee's future with the company; (5) explore the job requirements; (6) develop goals for future performance; (7) give appropriate praise and criticism; (8) stay on the subject; (9) use discussion summaries; (10) establish the proper climate; and (11) allow the interviewee to participate. The paper also offers suggestions for future research in the area. (FL)

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A Synthesis of Research on the Performance Appraisal Interview

Mike Stano

Michael Stano (Ph.D., University Of Minnesota, 1977) is an assistant professor of Speech Communication at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74074.

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A Synthesis of the Research on the Performance Appraisal Interview

Much has been written regarding the complex, multidimensional process of performance appraisal interviewing. Despite the plethora of treatises on the subject, little has been attempted by way of synthesis; no single source draws the wealth of literature together to form a comprehensive set of guidelines for the conduct of appraisal interviews. The intent of this paper is to correct this deficiency; directives for assessment sessions will be listed along with notations regarding the supporting research. In addition, recommendations will be offered for future investigations of evaluation discussions.

Interview Guidelines

Preinteraction Guidelines

Books and articles on the subject of appraisal contain a number of suggestions concerning that which should transpire before the interview. While these suggestions do not directly relate to the face-to-face discussion, they have a potential impact on subsequent supervisor-subordinate communication and for that reason they are germane to this analysis.

Plan the Interview. With an employee's performance rating in hand, managers are advised to spend some time getting ready for the interview. Often, the quality of the interview is dependent on the extent and nature of the advance preparation (Gill, 1977; Lahiff, 1973, p. 334; Trull, 1964; cf. Crawford, 1974, pp. 46-47). Huseman, Lahiff, and Hatfield (1976) have observed:

> Though not actually a part of the interview as it is normally conceived, preplanning is so crucial to the successful interview that it cannot be

overlooked. Though it is also obvious that the best made plans frequently go awry, consistently better results tend to be a by-product of effectively preplanning the interview. (p. 179)

Specifically, managers ought to review all information in the worker's personnel file including not only data tied to the relevant performance period but past accomplishments and problems as well (Beveridge, 1975, p. 76; Covner, 1953; Ford, 1964; Huseman et al., 1976, p. 179; Lewis, 1967; Maier, 1958, p. 226; Meyer, 1955; Michael, 1965; Morgan, 1967; Mott, 1967; Planty & Efferson, 1951; Stewart & Cash, 1974, p. 175). Based on these accumulated facts, the supervisor can begin to lay out flexible objectives for the pending interview and determine the means by which these objectives can best be achieved (Beecroft, 1967, p. 41; Beveridge, 1975, pp. 74, 76; Huseman et al., 1976, p. 179; Lahiff, 1973, p. 347; Lewis, 1967; Maier, 1958, p.226; Meyer, 1955; Planty & Efferson, 1951; Sigband, 1969, p. 660; Valentine, 1964, p. 19).

Of central importance in the outlining of objectives is the warning that if the discussion is to prove beneficial it should not attempt to accomplish too much. The focus should be narrow rather than broad and the aim modest rather than elaborate (Maier, 1958, pp. 3, 171-172; Valentine, 1964, p. 21). At most, three or four objectives should be selected (Calhoon, 1967, p. 242). Further, in its best form, the interview ought to be confined either to the objective of development or to the objective of performance-salary review. That is, the discussion should concentrate on devising plans of action for the future or it should concern the salary, promotion, and transfer decisions made by management with regard to the employee. It is almost universally agreed that it is deleterious to combine the development and salary discussions in one interview (Beecroft, 1967, pp. 36, 37, 43; Beveridge, 1975, p. 57; Butler, 1976, pp. 246-247; Cowan, 1975; Crawford, 1974, pp. 40-41; Hoppock,

1961; Kellogg, 1965, p. 194; Kindall & Gatza, 1976, p. 251; Maier, 1958, pp. 14, 170, 187-188; Meyer, Kay, & French, 1965; Miner, 1968; Morgan, 1964; Mott, 1967; Porter, Lawler, & Hackman, 1975, pp. 317-318, 338; Sutermeister, 1966; Williams, Walker, & Fletcher, 1977). This point is explained by Hayden (1973):

> It is generally accepted that attempts to discuss salary reviews and expected performance improvement in the same interview nearly always fail. The importance of the salary review will typically dominate the interview to the extent that neither the supervisor nor the employee is in the proper frame of mind to discuss plans for needed improvement in a manner which is conducive to lasting positive effects. (p. 606)

So then, in planning objectives, the manager should not only select from a relatively small number of discussion goals but should also restrict the interaction to a particular type of goal.

A number of companies rely on formal checklists to aid managers in planning the interview. These lists serve as planning reminders and they are designed to help the manager work through the material in the personnel file and assist him/her in the delineation of interview objectives (Clingenpeel, 1962; Grela, 1955; Jacobs, 1977). However, many contend that standardized preplanning tools are too general to be of any real value and that they result in interviews which are "canned" and lacking in spontaneity (Butler, 1976, p. 245; Hayden, 1973; Mott, 1967; Stewart & Cash, 1974, p. 175). Regardless of one's point of view on this issue, some systematic process of planning can be carried out in the absence of a detailed form. If forms are used, it is certain that they must not be viewed as rigid and unadaptable.

To this point, only the manager's function in preplanning has been discussed. Whether or not the employee does any advance work is largely

dependent on the type of interview the manager intends to conduct. If the discussion is to be totally directed by the supervisor, little planning on the part of the subordinate is required. If, on the other hand, the employee is to be more than just a reactor, he/she needs to go through basically the same preliminary steps demanded of the employer (Meyer, 1955; Stewart & Cash, 1974, p. 175). The nature and value of a participative interviewee role is discussed later.

Properly Schedule the Interview. The principle concern in scheduling the interview is a determination of the amount of time that should be set aside for it. Obviously, no hard and fast rules governing this facet of the process can be laid out and managerial discretion comes into play. Generally, the time allotment should be neither too short nor too long. Short sessions may prevent even simple interview goals from being realized and marathon meetings tend to tire both participants (Beecroft, 1967, pp. 41-42; Crawford, 1974, p. 47; Morgan, 1964; Stewart & Cash, 1974, pp. 179-180; Trull, 1964; Valentine, 1964, p. 23). Supervisors must survey their list of goals and, using their best judgment, schedule accordingly.

The employee should be informed of the time selected for the interview well in advance. The lead-time may vary anywhere from several hours to several weeks depending on the degree of formal preparation requested but even if no active involvement is sought, some time is necessary for the subordinate to gear-up psychologically for the event (Beecroft, 1967, p. 32; Ford, 1964; Michael, 1965; Trull, 1964; Valentine, 1964, p. 23; 1965b; Zeitlein, 1969; cf. Crawford, 1974, p. 46).

Choose an Appropriate Setting. Appraisal interviews are often held in the manager's office and too few realize the threat this can introduce. The best place for the discussion is in neutral territory where neither subordinate nor supervisor feels uncomfortable (Beecroft, 1967, p. 41; Valentine,

1964, p. 23).

Wherever the interview is located, the manager should try to guarantee complete privacy and freedom from even the most minor interruption. Telephone calls should be cut off and all uninvolved persons should be restrained from entering the area (Beecroft, 1967, p. 42; Beveridge, 1975, p. 75; Covner, 1953; Fear, 1973, pp. 60-61; Ford, 1964; Leskovec, 1967; Lewis, 1967; Michael, 1965; Morgan, 1964; Planty & Efferson, 1951; Trull, 1964; Valentine, 1965b).

Once isolated in the chosen room, the manager ought not allow barriers to fill the space between him/her and the employee. An interceding expanse of desk, especially if it is cluttered with papers, can serve to distance the worker physically and psychologically. Side-to-side or corner seating is to be preferred (Beveridge, 1975, pp. 75-76).

Interaction Guidelines

With the necessary planning, scheduling, and locating tasks accomplished, attention can be directed to the interview itself. Information relating to the actual conduct of performance appraisal interviews may be divided into two categories: material dealing with what should be discussed (i.e., the topics for the interview) and material dealing with how to discuss the various subjects (i.e., the style of interviewing). Suggestions which are relevant to the selection of topics for the evaluation session will be presented first.

Concentrate on Results rather than Personality. Manager and employee ought to discuss job outputs or results rather than personality issues for trait analysis often leads to unproductive defensiveness (Beecroft, 1967, pp. 37, 43; Beveridge, 1975, pp. 15-16; Cummings & Schwab, 1973, p. 116; Fairley, 1977; Gellerman, 1968, pp. 108-110; Hayden, 1973; Hoppock, 1961; Jacobs, 1977; Kelly, 1958; Kindall & Gatza, 1976, pp. 249-250; Latham & Wexley, 1977; Levinson, 1976; McGregor, 1957; Maier, 1958, p. 207; Meyer,

1955; Morgan, 1964; Parkinson, 1977; Schnake, 1978; Sherwin, 1976; Stewart & Cash, 1974, pp. 178-179; Valentine, 1964, p. 5; cf. Keeley, 1977; Sutermeister, 1966). Stolz (1961) accurately reflects contemporary theory in this area:

> In companies where people are judged on the basis of the results of their work and where an attempt is made to orient the appraisal discussion to the job, rarely if ever is a healthy relationship between supervisor and subordinate destroyed. . . .
>
> On the other hand, in companies whose rating forms focus on personality traits, appraisal interviews are usually carried out halfheartedly, in an atmosphere of mutual embarrassment, and with little success. (p. 32)

Recent court decisions regarding EEOC requirements suggest another reason for concentrating on results. Employers who base appraisals on vague or subjective data are liable to litigation; ratings of performance must stem from job analyses to be legal and nondiscriminatory and it is doubtful that many personality variables could survive the validation procedures (Holley & Feild, 1975; Schneier, 1977).

In Analyzing Results, Account for Variables outside the Employee's Control. If a subordinate fails an assigned task it may well be due to his/her own negligence. Alternately, other forces in the organization could have so hindered the ability to do work that the employee cannot be held responsible. Beveridge (1975) characterizes and clarifies the problem:

> But no appraisal concerns only the appraiser and the appraised. Appraisal is set inevitably within an organizational context; the subordinate's job performance is determined to some degree by the performance of his superiors, his colleagues and his own subordinates

> and in turn his performance helps to determine their performance. His performance may have failed to achieve its goals because his superior neglected to pass on information or neglected to pass it on in time, or did not obtain for him adequate financial resources, because one or more of his colleagues did not complete tasks on which the success of his own performance depended, because there was a "go-slow" among his subordinates arising out of a situation over which he had no control, and so on. (pp. 26-27)

The appraisal discussion should attempt to ferret out and deal with external causes of inadequate performance. For positive feelings to result from the interview, the total job situation must be reviewed (Beecroft, 1967, pp. 24, 43; Burke & Wilcox, 1969a; Hoppock, 1961; Kellogg, 1965, p. 73; Kelly, 1958; Levinson, 1970; Maier, 1958, pp. 169, 189-191; Parkinson, 1977; Sherwin, 1976; Slusher & Sims, 1975; Stewart & Cash, 1974, pp. 180-181).

Discuss the Employee's Future with the Company. Whether development or salary oriented, the appraisal interview ought to spend some time considering the subordinate's future life within the company. Workers want to know not only where they have been but where they are going and a discussion of career opportunities is therefore both desirable and appropriate (Gellerman, 1968, pp. 143-144; Maier, 1958, p. 208; Valentine, 1964, p. 25; 1965b).

Explore the Requirements of the Job. While it may sound absurd, many employees approach their jobs not really knowing what it is their superior wants them to do or the standards against which their output will be judged. The performance review session should be viewed as a time to exchange and refine job descriptions and to communicate and clarify evaluation criteria (Gellerman, 1968, p. 137; Lahiff, 1973, p. 343; Levinson, 1976; Maier, 1958,

p. 204; Oberg, 1972; Planty & Efferson, 1951; Valentine, 1964, p. 11).

Outline Goals for Future Performance. In the salary review, a consideration of future performance goals is not usually relevant, but this subject will most likely occupy more time than any other in developmental sessions (Beecroft, 1967, pp. 28, 42; Hayden, 1973; Haynes, 1970; Kindall & Gatza, 1976, p. 250; Maier, 1958, pp. 188-189; Stewart & Cash, 1974, p. 179). Perhaps the most important criterion for quality goals is that they be clear and specific rather than "do your best" in nature (Beecroft, 1967, p. 25; Carroll & Tosi, 1970; Colby & Wallace, 1975; Ford, 1964; Mott, 1967). In a number of field experiments, the setting of specific goals has been shown to be positively correlated to employee satisfaction (Arvey, Dewhirst, & Boling, 1976; Carroll & Tosi, 1970; Kim & Hammer, 1976), task motivation/interest (Bryan & Locke, 1967; Kim & Hammer, 1976; Locke & Bryan, 1967), and enhanced production (Beecroft, 1967, p. 36; Burke & Wilcox, 1969a; Calhoon, 1967, p. 243; French, Kay, & Meyer, 1966; Kim & Hammer, 1976; Latham & Baldes, 1975; Latham & Yukl, 1976; Locke & Bryan, 1967; Meyer et al., 1965; Ronan, Latham, & Kinne, 1973; Steers & Porter, 1974).

In addition to being specific, goals should focus on concrete, observable, and measurable behaviors (Beecroft, 1967, p. 25; Mott, 1967). To the extent possible, the level of attainment of performance targets ought to be assessable by quantifiable means, for goals which center on countable phenomena force appraisals to deal with results and discourage analyses of personality.

A further guideline is that goals should be challenging to the individual (Beecroft, 1967, p. 24; Campbell & Ilgen, 1976). Objectives which are easily realized hold down company profits and restrain personal growth. This is not to say that goals should be impossibly difficult; it should be feasible for the employee to achieve the target if he/she strives hard enough.

By necessity, goals must be matched to the capabilities of each individual (Beecroft, 1967, pp. 24, 26; Carroll & Tosi, 1970).

In establishing goals, supervisors and subordinates must remember that they are not functioning in isolation. The aspirations of the company must be considered (Beecroft, 1967, p. 26; Carroll & Tosi, 1970; Maier, 1958, pp. 192-194; Slusher & Sims, 1975). The most desirable goal is, according to Levinson (1970), one which satisfies the worker and management at the same time:

> Thus the highest point of self-motivation arises when there is a complementary conjunction of the man's needs and the organization's requirements. The requirements of both mesh, interrelate, and become synergistic. The energies of man and organization are pooled for mutual advantage. (p. 129)

A final suggestion for the delineation of goals is that selected objectives should be prioritized by the supervisor and subordinate (Carroll & Tosi, 1970; Sherwin, 1976; Stewart & Cash, 1974, p. 181). Since it is not feasible for the worker to concentrate on all aspects of development at once, it is necessary to devote some discussion time to determining which goals should be tackled immediately and which should be deferred.

In sum, goal-setting is an important activity which should be included in most nonsalary performance appraisal interviews. Whether goals are established by the manager alone, the employee alone, or the two jointly, they should be specific, measurable, challenging, satisfactory to both worker and company, and prioritized.

Give Appropriate Praise and Criticism. Sooner or later in almost every interview, the manager must confront the somewhat onerous task of subordinate evaluation. There is much professional disagreement as to the form this

feedback on performance should take. Some contend that employees truly like criticism (Mayfield, 1960; Porter et al., 1975, p. 318; Stone, 1973) while others argue that negative comments inherently arouse feelings of embarrassment, hostility, and defensiveness (Argyle, 1972, p. 162; Butler, 1976, pp. 313-314; Calhoon, 1967, p. 243; Crawford, 1974, pp. 40, 46; Kay, Meyer, & French, 1965; Maier, 1958, pp. 15-16; Meyer et al., 1965; Stewart & Cash, 1974, p. 169) and ultimately lead to a breakdown of communication (Crawford, 1974, pp. 38-39, 44-45; Gibb, 1961), excuse making (Gibb, 1961; Meyer et al., 1965), resentment of the appraisal process (Burke & Wilcox, 1969a; Kay et al., 1965), and lower levels of production (Beecroft, 1967, p. 36; Burke & Wilcox, 1969a; Kay et al., 1965; Meyer et al., 1965; Porter et al., 1975, p. 321). At the opposite end of the evaluation continuum the same dilemma is present. It is said that workers need to be praised for their achievements (Beecroft, 1967, p. 31; Cowan, 1975; Crawford, 1974, pp. 38-39, 43-45, 48; Farson, 1973; Kelly, 1958; Stone, 1973) but praise can also generate defensiveness (Bordonaro, 1976; Farson, 1973) and the presence or absence of it has little bearing on later job effort (Bordonaro, 1976; Calhoon, 1967, p. 234; Farson, 1973; Kay et al., 1965; Meyer et al., 1965; cf. Beecroft, 1967, p. 34; Lahiff, 1973, p. 342).

Supervisors cannot simply refuse to deal with this subject because the interviewee's reaction is so unpredictable. The topic must be discussed because, at least in some instances, it has the potential of providing a foundation for learning. They key to the problem seems to lie not in skirting the issue entirely but rather in circumventing the debilitating effects of evaluation. Difficulties may be avoided a number of ways. First, the proper balance should be struck between praise and criticism. Frequently, appraisers provide negative feedback in overkill doses and it is excessive criticism, not criticism per se, which is disruptive (Clingenpeel, 1962; Kay et al.,

1965; Lahiff, 1973, p. 342; Planty & Efferson, 1951; Stewart & Cash, 1974, p. 177; Valentine, 1964, p. 20). This notion is most succinctly summarized by Meyer et al. (1965):

> Employees seem to accept suggestions for improved performance if they are given in a less concentrated form . . . employees become clearly more prone to reject criticisms as the number of criticisms mount. This indicates that an "overload phenomenon" may be operating. In other words, each individual seems to have a tolerance level for the amount of criticism he can take. And, as this level is approached or passed, it becomes increasingly difficult for him to accept. responsibility for the shortcomings pointed out. (p. 127)

If Farson (1973) and Bordonaro (1976) are correct in their argument that praise can be threatening too, workers may have a "tolerance level" for positive evaluation as well and managers should, as a result, be wary of appearing overly supportive. In the final analysis, it would be wise to attempt to establish an appropriate ratio between comments of approval and comments of condemnation.

A second method of minimizing hard feelings during evaluation concerns the time placement of praise and criticism. Common to older "how-to" appraisal interview manuals is the suggestion that criticism be "sandwiched" by praise (Fear, 1973, pp. 74-75). This technique involves placing a negative statement between two positive ones and allegedly the pro-con-pro sequence makes the discussion of failings easier to accept. However, most employees quickly become aware of the manager's attempt to be clever with them and consequently the strategy usually falls short of its intended purpose (Beecroft, 1967, p. 37; Kay et al., 1965). A more highly recommended procedure is to dispense supportive feedback almost exclusively at the beginning of the

interview (Argyle, 1972, p. 163; Leskovec, 1967; Lewis, 1967; Morgan, 1964; Planty & Efferson, 1951; Sigband, 1969, p. 666). This tactic helps establish an initial positive climate and once aware that his/her supervisor is duly appreciative of past successes, the subordinate becomes more receptive to a thorough analysis of those areas in which there is room for improvement. Certainly there is no prohibition against giving praise later in the interview but if the bulk of it comes at the outset the manager will probably appear less manipulative.

Giving the proper kind of criticism can also reduce the defensiveness workers so often experience. Criticism should be based on objective evidence, observed examples, and factual information rather than on subjective impressions (Cowan, 1975; Feinberg, 1961; Lewis, 1967; Likert, 1959; Mott, 1967; Sigband, 1969, p. 666; Stewart & Cash, 1974, p. 176; Stone, 1973; Valentine, 1965b). In addition, criticism ought to be constructive in nature; instead of dwelling on past failures, the focus should be on what specific actions can be taken to eliminate future performance deficiencies (Burke & Wilcox, 1969a; Butler, 1976, p. 244; Finn, 1960; Maier, 1973, p. 556; Mayfield, 1960; Miner, 1968; Porter et al., 1975, p. 320; Schnake, 1978; Slusher & Sims, 1975).

During evaluation, managers are not likely to be completely successful in their attempts to forestall adverse reactions on the part of employees. However, if praise and criticism are given in accordance with the general guidelines developed here, pathological responses will, for the most part, be rare.

Good performance appraisal interviews are characterized not only by specific kinds of content but also by the style employed by the participants during the interaction. The directions which follow pertain to the manner

in which the various subjects are treated.

Stay on the Subject. Like all interviews, the appraisal discussion is a "conversation directed to a definite purpose" (Stewart & Cash, 1974, p. 2). Because of this, managers must exert some control to prevent needless detours, escapes, and irrelevant exchanges (Lahiff, 1973, p. 333; Planty & Efferson, 1951; Valentine, 1964, p. 19; 1965a). While some deviation from the point is allowable, the supervisor and subordinate have a well defined job to do during the session and they should not aimlessly wander into subject areas outside the theme of the meeting.

Utilize Summaries. For clarity, it is important that interviewers make use of initial and final discussion summaries. A preview of where the interview is going builds trust in the supervisor, allows the subordinate to organize his/her thoughts, upgrades the quality of employee contributions, and generally improves session efficiency (Fear, 1973, p. 69; Lahiff, 1973, pp. 348-349). A conclusionary recapitulation of main ideas expressed better assures mutual agreement on specified plans of action (Huseman et al., 1976, p. 161; Lahiff, 1973, p. 350; Lewis, 1967; Michael, 1965; Morgan, 1964; Sigband, 1969, p. 665; Stewart & Cash, 1974, pp. 177, 179; Trull, 1964; Valentine, 1964, p. 25).

Establish the Proper Climate. The climate present in an appraisal interview is affected by a complex array of interlocking and intangible variables. Overall, communication will be more open and honest and problem solving will be facilitated if the manager can genuinely consider the employee an equal and can appear spontaneous, friendly, supportive, sensitive to and interested in the difficulties of the worker, empathetic and understanding, cooperative, nonjudgmental with regard to feelings revealed, nonmanipulative, concerned for the dignity and worth of the individual,

trusting, and confident of the employee's abilities (Argyle, 1972, p. 162; Beveridge, 1975, p. 51; Burke & Wilcox, 1969b; Butler, 1976, p. 243; Colby & Wallace, 1975; Crawford, 1974, pp. 33, 35-36; Fear, 1973, pp. 32, 63-64, 66, 73, 76-77; Ford, 1964; Gibb, 1961; Kelly, 1958; Lahiff, 1973, p. 351; Leskovec, 1967; Lewis, 1967; Likert, 1959; Maier, 1958, pp. 10-11, 13, 189, 224, 226-227, 229; 1973, p. 550; Mayfield, 1960; Richards, 1960; Sigband, 1969, p. 662; Slusher & Sims, 1975; Smith & Wakeley, 1972, p. 287; Stewart & Cash, 1974, p. 180; Stolz, 1961; Trull, 1964; Valentine, 1964, p. 21; 1965a). Obviously, the tone of the interview is dependent not only on what occurs within its confines but also on the day-to-day working relationship of supervisor and subordinate. To establish the proper discussion climate requires ongoing, continuous effort (Burke & Wilcox, 1969a; Colby & Wallace, 1975; Cowan, 1975; Haynes, 1970; Kelly, 1958; Morgan, 1964).

Allow Subordinate Participation. At various points in this review of the literature it has been noted that managers can either take full charge of the appraisal session themselves or they can permit some degree of employee participation in determining the content and direction of the interview. In this section, the various ways in which the worker might become involved will be delineated and the merits of an active interviewee role will be assessed.

Most commonly, subordinates are drawn into the appraisal process in one of two ways. First, instead of being asked to accept a list of work goals generated by their manager, employees may be required to prepare their own set of future performance objectives (Beecroft, 1967, p. 26; Kellogg, 1965, p. 82; McGregor, 1957; Morgan, 1964). A second method of drawing in the worker, often used in conjunction with the first, is to have him/her do a self appraisal of performance (Beecroft, 1967, pp. 31, 39; Fairley, 1977; Gill, 1977; Kellogg, 1965, p. 73; Margerison, 1976;

McGregor, 1957; Morgan, 1964; Patz, 1975, Stewart & Cash, 1974, p. 180; Williams et al., 1977).

It is crucial to keep in mind that subordinate goal setting and evaluation does not totally absolve the manager of responsibility for what happens in the interview or make obsolete any of the substantive or style guidelines previously mentioned. The supervisor must still plan, schedule, give praise and criticism, etc., as he/she would if the discussion were nonparticipative, but accountability for session quality becomes a mutual concern and the position of the manager shifts from that of a dictator to that of a counselor or coach who guides and assists more subtly (Beecroft, 1967, pp. 27-28, 41; Cummings & Schwab, 1973, p. 116; Haynes, 1970; Kellogg, 1965, p. 73; McGregor, 1957). This altered function, instead of removing obligations, places new demands on the supervisor. He/she must be more open minded with regard to discussion organization and content, more flexible in terms of solutions to work problems, and more willing to negotiate changes in the management-made rating of performance should the employee provide reasons for doing so (Beecroft, 1967, pp. 42-43; Finn, 1960; Maier, 1958, pp. 10-11, 15-17, 19, 194-197; Meyer, 1955; Stewart & Cash, 1974, pp. 176-177, 181; Valentine, 1964, p. 19). Futhermore, the supervisor must acquire new skills aimed at encouraging the subordinate to talk. Optimally, the interviewee should monopolize from 40 to 60% of the discussion time in the participative interview (Crawford, 1974, p. 49; Maier, 1958, p. 169; Mayfield, 1960; Parkinson, 1977), and this feat is accomplished only when the manager has been taught to listen carefully and accurately (Beecroft, 1967, p. 42; Beveridge, 1975, p. 98; Feinberg, 1961; Hoppock, 1958; Patz, 1975; Planty & Efferson, 1951; Sigband, 1969, pp. 663-664; Valentine, 1964, p. 21; 1965a), to give reflective feedback (Beveridge,

1975, p. 93; Hoppock, 1958; Maier, 1958, p. 169; Richards, 1960), and to ask appropriate, openended, nondirective questions (Beecroft, 1967, p. 42; Beveridge, 1975, pp. 74, 92-93; Fear, 1973, p. 60; Ford, 1964; Huseman et al., 1976, p. 161; Lahiff, 1973, pp. 336-337; Maier, 1958, p. 15; Michael, 1965; Stewart & Cash, 1974, pp. 176-177).

Even though there are added burdens to be shouldered by the interactants when this style of interviewing is employed, the potential dividends are significant. First, discussions tend to be more productive, meaningful, constructive, and satisfying (Arvey et al., 1976; Bassett & Meyer, 1968; Beveridge, 1975, p. 82; Burke, 1970; Burke & Wilcox, 1969a; Crawford, 1974, p. 42; Cummings & Schwab, 1973, p. 115; Greller, 1975; Maier, 1958; McGregor, 1957; Meyer, 1955; Stone, 1973; Valentine, 1964, p. 19; 1965a). Defensiveness and other hostile reactions are quelled (Bassett & Meyer, 1968; Beveridge, 1975, pp. 18, 25-26; Colby & Wallace, 1975; Gibb, 1961; Kelly, 1958; Lahiff, 1973, p. 342; Maier, 1958, pp. 5-7; Meyer et al., 1965; Richards, 1960; Sutermeister, 1966; cf. Baird, 1977) and attitudes regarding the quality of supervision and the overall value of the entire appraisal process shift in the positive direction (Burke & Wilcox, 1969a; Cummings, 1973; French et al., 1966; Greller, 1975; Kirk, 1965; Maier, 1958, p. 12; Porter et al., 1975, p. 336). Second, supervisors and subordinates are better able to pool their resources and the two-way flow of communication can be enlightening and educational for both (Hoppock, 1961; Maier, 1958, pp. 9, 19, 235-236; Meyer, 1955; Patz, 1975; Valentine, 1964, p. 16). Third, worker involvement in the interview results in mutually set and agreed on goals which, compared to manager-set objectives, are simultaneously more reasonable and difficult (Latham & Yukl, 1975; Porter et al., 1975, p. 336), better accepted and internalized by the subordinate (Beecroft, 1967, p. 44;

French et al., 1966; Latham & Yukl, 1976; Maier, 1958, pp. 169-170, 187; Porter et al., 1975, pp. 335-336; Sigband, 1969, pp. 664-665), more highly motivating (Beecroft, 1967, pp. 33-34; Calhoon, 1967, p. 239; Greller, 1975; Kindall & Gatza, 1976, p. 254; Lahiff, 1973, p. 343; Levinson, 1970; Maier, 1973, p. 557; Slusher & Sims, 1975; Steers & Porter, 1974; Stewart & Cash, 1974, p. 177), and achieved with greater frequency (Bassett & Meyer, 1968; Beecroft, 1967, p. 36; Burke & Wilcox, 1969a; Latham & Yukl, 1975; Meyer et al., 1965; Miner, 1968; Steers & Porter, 1974; cf. Carroll & Tosi, 1970; Gellerman, 1968, p. 142). Fourth, self appraisals are often fairer and in other ways superior to supervisor appraisals (Colby & Wallace, 1975; Heneman, 1974; Hoppock, 1958; 1961; Margerison, 1976; cf. Baird, 1977; Cowan, 1975; Gill, 1977; Porter et al., 1975, p. 318).

All of the advantages stemming from participation seem to accrue whether or not the subordinate actually becomes involved in the interview. Employee knowledge that he/she can contribute if he/she wants to is sufficient to obtain the desired results (Greller, 1975).

The participative approach to interviewing is not a panacea and although some studies have shown that is can be used equally well by all supervisors with all employees in all circumstances (Hayden, 1973; Latham & Yukl, 1976; Patz, 1975; Tosi, 1970; Wexley, Singh, & Yukl, 1973) it would be more realistic to contend that it should be applied with some degree of selectivity. Some managers may be more successful utilizing subordinate participation than others (Maier, 1958, p. 2; Mayfield, 1960; Smith & Wakeley, 1974, p. 287) and some interviewees, especially those with experience and those with high independence needs, may respond more favorably to the active role than do job novices low on authoritarianism (Arvey et al., 1976; Bassett & Meyer, 1968; Beveridge, 1975, p. 21; Fear, 1973, p. 33; Gill, 1977; Hillery & Wexley, 1974;

Leskovec, 1967; Mahler, 1947, p. v.; Maier, 1958, p. 8; 1973, p. 556; Meyer et al., 1965; Stewart & Cash, 1974, p. 177; Sutermeister, 1966; Valentine, 1964, pp. 7, 16, 19-20; 1965a). Steers and Porter (1974) have accurately observed:

> It appears that no universal conclusion can be drawn regarding the effects of participation. . . .Situational and personality factors must apparently be taken into account in determining the . . . implications of such participation. (p. 239)

Clearly, the style of the interview must be tailored to fit the individuals involved.

Summary of Guidelines

Based on the material available, it may be concluded that appraisal discussions approach the ideal when an effort is made to:

1. Plan the interview.
2. Properly schedule the interview.
3. Choose an appropriate setting.
4. Concentrate on results rather than personality.
5. Account for variables outside the employee's control.
6. Discuss the employee's future with the company.
7. Explore the requirements of the job.
8. Develop goals for future performance.
9. Give appropriate praise and criticism.
10. Stay on the subject.
11. Utilize summaries.
12. Establish the proper climate.
13. Allow subordinate participation.

Recommendations for Future Investigations

An examination of the foregoing directives and literature might cause one to believe that there is no need for additional research on performance appraisal interviews. Such is not the case; the individual who wishes to delve into the process of assessment sessions might follow any number of avenues.

To begin with, scholars might attempt to empirically document the relationship between specific guidelines and productive interviews. While some of the concepts mentioned such as participation, goal setting, and the effects of criticism, have been tested in quasi-experimental settings, the literature is, on the whole, rather anecdotal and of the "folklore" variety. Until more substantial and reliable data is gathered, caution is advised when applying the guidelines.

The situationality of the guidelines could also be probed. Currently, most directives are treated as being more or less universal in their application. It is reasonable to contend, however, that some variables might be relevant in one context and not relevant at all or less relevant in others. Keeley (1977), for example, has recently suggested that results-centered appraisals are not rational in certain occupations. Efforts aimed at determining the relative weight or importance of other suggestions for the appraisal discussion would seem useful.

Students of appraisal could, in addition, begin to develop detailed and specific interview paradigms for use by specialized vocations. At present, directives found in journals and books are too vague to be truly useful to managers. Just as it makes sense to argue that variables might differ in their importance to various occupations, it also makes sense to argue that not all occupations finding a variable important would choose to apply

or operationalize it in the same way. Planning, participation, etc., might well take different forms for clerical, sales, and engineering jobs. Future researchers could concentrate on tailoring the broad, general outlines of what should take place in the interview to fit individual applications.

The interviewee's role in the appraisal discussion deserves further definition. Most published material is designed for consumption by the manager and the subordinate is infrequently provided with solid, explicit guidelines for his/her behavior (Crawford, 1974, pp. 50-51; Greller, 1975). The area of subordinate literature is impoverished and this state of affairs denies the interactive nature of communication in evaluative settings. It is true that management literature often has implications for employee behavior, but directions generated exclusively for subordinates would afford the worker the opportunity to play a more informed and active part in influencing the quality of the exchange and they might provide a base for nonmanagement appraisal training programs.

A final recommendation for research is that we begin to examine the impact of sex roles on appraisal. It is surprising that, thus far, investigations have ignored the effects of the sex of the participants on assessment discussions. Interviews might involve female subordinates and male supervisors, female subordinates and female supervisors, or male subordinates and female supervisors; each of these conditions could entail different interviewing styles or tactics and it would certainly be interesting to learn how the dynamics of the appraisal process change as the nature of the dyad changes.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to bring together that which has been written concerning appraisal interviews. While the review of the literature is comprehensive in terms of the topics covered, it may have omitted some related articles or books; the appraisal literature is broad and forever proliferating and to provide total coverage is an impossible task. Nevertheless, managers, consultants, and teachers of courses in organization behavior, organizational communication, and interviewing should find here stimulus for reflection, training, or research.

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